



More than 50 people representing middle and high school counselors and the trades in NW Indiana come together at forum

Energy and lively discussion was plentiful on February 27th at the Northwest Indiana Construction & Trades Forum, sponsored by the Works Council of NW Indiana, Northwest Indiana Workforce Board, and the Center of Workforce Innovations. Facilitator, Steve Corona posed the following questions to begin the session: With more than 20 apprenticeship programs in Northwest Indiana, who are the construction and trades hiring? How can we draw the right people in? What is the role of educators and what resources and tools do they need in getting young people prepared for a path in career and technical education and making sure parents are in the loop? What challenges do all parties face and how might they work together to address those challenges?

The projection of a 24% increase in jobs in the construction and trades industry was presented to panelists who all agreed that the projection was absolutely right. The panelists, Joe Coar with Tonn & Blank Construction, Kevin Comerford with the Construction Advancement Foundation, John Dudlicek with Grimmer Construction, and Randy Palmateer with the Northwest Indiana Building & Trades Council, all shared similar thoughts on workforce needs and how exposing kids beginning in middle school will be critical in making some headway on improving the number of students selecting career and technical education in high school.

When discussing the many skills that the trades are requiring, industry representatives in the room cited safety as being critical, but that basic math, reading, and writing skills and overall soft skills are essential and those are often skills that many applicants lack--restricting them from getting into many apprenticeship programs.

The Forum was sponsored by the Works Council of Northwest Indiana, Northwest Indiana Workforce Board, and the Center of Workforce Innovations, as part of an ongoing effort of facilitating discussion between secondary and post-secondary education and trades organizations that address challenges and identify solutions on making sure career and technical education is a clear and viable choice for high school students.

For further information contact CWI at 219-462-2940.

